2/6 NET

Historical Guide

to

Kells,

(CEANANNUS MOR)

County Meath

WITH MAP.

By

JOHN HEALY, LL.D,

Formerly Rector of Kells and Archdeacon of Meath.

DA
995
C45
H42
1930
CTU
Storage

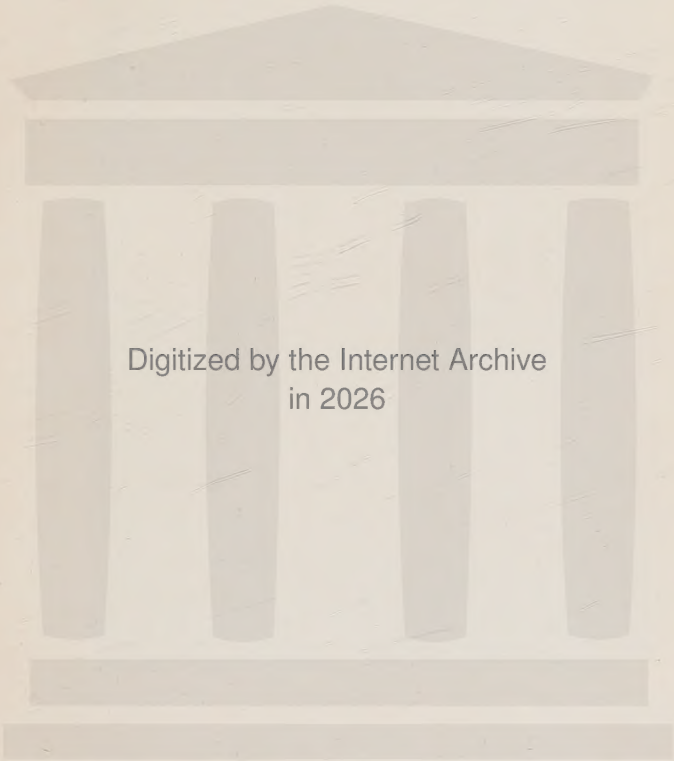
Printed and Published by
GEORGE F. HEALY & CO., Ltd.,
23 Lower Ormond Quay,
DUBLIN.

1930.

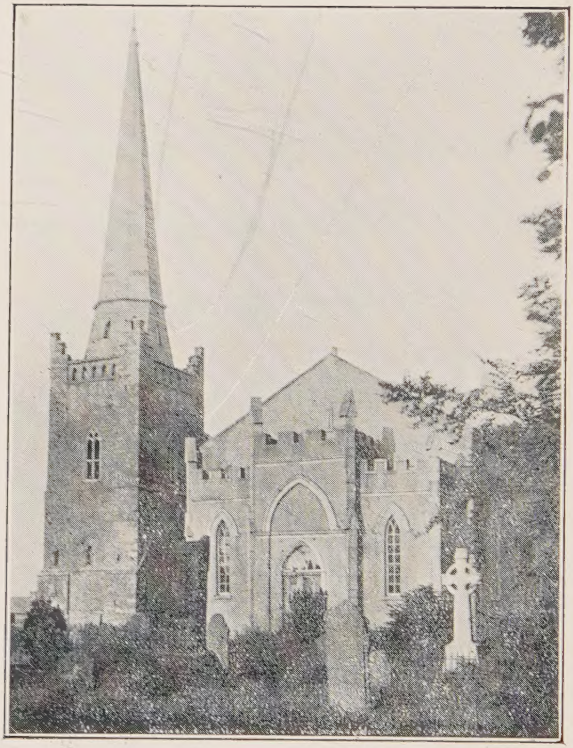
THE
SANDFORD FLEMING
LIBRARY

Gift of
Dr. Stacy R. Warburton

GRADUATE THEOLOGICAL UNION
2400 Ridge Road
Berkeley, CA 94709


Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2026

https://archive.org/details/historicalguidet0000unse_v0f6



[*Photo by A. S. Hardy.*

S. COLUMBA'S CHURCH,
KELLS.

Historical Guide

to

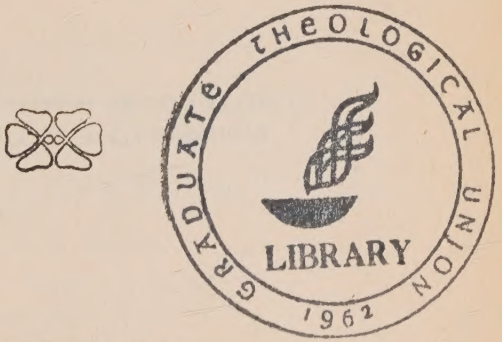
Kells,

(CEANANNUS MOR)

County Meath.

By

JOHN HEALY, LL.D.,
Formerly Rector of Kells and Archdeacon of Meath.



Printed and Published by
GEORGE F. HEALY & CO., Ltd.,
23 Lower Ormond Quay,
DUBLIN.

1930.

DA
995
C45
H42
1938

YA 24
H34

BERKELEY BAPTIST DIVINITY SCHOOL
SANDFORD FLEMING LIBRARY

CONTENTS.

	Page
CHAPTER I.	
Kells in History	7
CHAPTER II.	
The Geography of the Town of Kells	10
CHAPTER III.	
S. Columkill's House	11
CHAPTER IV.	
The Round Tower	13
CHAPTER V.	
The Stone Crosses	15
CHAPTER VI.	
Sepulchral Slabs	21
CHAPTER VII.	
The Church Tower	22
CHAPTER VIII.	
The Roman Catholic Church	24
CHAPTER IX.	
The Walls	25
CHAPTER X.	
Neighbouring Antiquities	26
(A) Druidical Remains at Loughcrew	26
(B) Ancient Palace of Teltown	26
(C) Church of Dulane	26
(D) Church of S. Keiran the Pious	27
(E) Ogham Stone	27
(F) Holy Well of S. Keiran	28
CHAPTER XI.	
Antiquities of Kells Elsewhere	29
(1) The Book of Kells	29
(2) The Crozier of Kells	29
(3) The Cathac; The Bell of S. Patrick; The Miosach	30
CHAPTER XII.	
Kells of To-day	31

Map of Kells inside back Cover.

20502

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS.

S. Columba's Church	*Frontispiece*
	page.
S. Columkill's House	11
The Round Tower	13
Anglo Norman Tombstone	15
Cross beside Round Tower	16
Street or Market Cross	17
Carvings on Street or Market Cross	17
Design on Street or Market Cross	17
Shaft of Cross at Church Door	19
The Unfinished Cross	21
Map of Kells	*inside back Cover*

PREFACE.

The friends of the Venerable Archdeacon Healy (for thirty years Rector of Kells) will be delighted that he has allowed his knowledge of the Antiquities of Kells and its neighbourhood to be placed in lasting form. This book, printed at the Archdeacon's own expense, is his gift to the Parish with his expressed wish that the proceeds of its sale should be expended on the upkeep of the Parish Church and its surroundings.

It may be of interest for me to state that during the months May to October, 1929 (the Tourist period), over 170 visitors inscribed their names in the Visitors' Book, many of them coming from far distant lands.

To the knowledge of the writer of this preface the visitors invariably enquired "Have you any printed History or Guide explanatory of your Antiquities?" Up to the present the reply has had to be in the negative. Now, however this long-felt want has been supplied and I feel assured that future visitors to Kells when they peruse the contents of this little book will find that they have been helped considerably in their search for answers to their many queries.

I acknowledge with grateful thanks my indebtedness to the Council of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland for its kindness in lending a number of the necessary blocks for the illustrations.

FRANCIS J. A. BEERE,
Clk., M.A.

The Rectory,
Kells, Co. Meath.
July, 1930.

Guide to the Antiquities of Kells.

CHAPTER I.

KELLS IN HISTORY.

The history of Kells goes back to long before the time of Abraham—the oldest record being that in the year of the world 2850 (according to the Septuagint Computation) a great warrior named Nemedius came and settled in Ireland and cleared the plain of Magh-Seredh, which was the ancient name of the district round Kells. Twelve hundred years before the Birth of Christ it became a royal residence and obtained the name Ceanannus, now being revived. It means Head Fort, and the name Kells or Kenlis is supposed to be simply a shortened form of the old name.

The Great Cormac Mac Art (A.D. 215 to 260), most famous of all pre-Christian Kings, spent here his declining years. He had been wounded in the eye, and as no King with a blemish was allowed to reign in Tara, he was banished from that royal seat. The story of his courtship and marriage with a peasant girl (probably at Kells) is one of the most beautiful of the old Irish legends.

In 550 A.D. Saint Columba obtained a grant of the royal dun of Kells from King Dermod and for many years it continued to be a great ecclesiastical foundation.

At the beginning of the 9th century the Norse pirates devastated the Island of Iona, and the Monks fled from their Island home and came to Kells, which at once rose to an importance it had not known before, and became temporarily the head of all the establishments of the Columban Order, Iona itself being for a time subject to it.

The Danes brought great trouble to Ireland, but for the first hundred years after their coming Kells was free from their unwelcome attentions. We first find them in 918 plundering the Monastery and destroying the Church. Thirty years later they made it their headquarters, and, going out from thence, plundered the Churches of Meath. From that time on they came again and again and we can only wonder how the community survived so many attacks.

In 1152 a great Synod was held in Kells at which Cardinal Papiro presided. It was one of the most important ecclesiastical assemblies that Ireland has ever known. Here palls were for the first time bestowed on the Archbishops, and many canons of reform were passed. At this Synod the bishopric of Kells was suppressed, but it continued, notwithstanding the suppression, for some years longer. The office of Archdeacon of Kells continued until the time of Henry VIII.

The Anglo-Normans came to Ireland in 1172 and four years later they devastated Kells. After which they set up their own rule and Hugh de Lacy was granted the Kingdom of Meath. He built the wall and erected a castle, and the place became of importance as it was situated on the borders of the Pale and had therefore to be kept with a strong garrison. For many years after that

Kells became to all intents and purposes an English town and the native Irish were more or less rigorously excluded.

The dissolution of the Monasteries under Henry VIII. was a great blow to Kells, for the abbeys of Saint Mary and Saint John had risen to great importance, having many inmates and great wealth. The century that followed was a time of unrest when the whole country was in a turmoil, and Kells had its share in the disasters of the time. The disorders culminated in the disturbances of 1641, after which nearly all the landed proprietors of the district were dispossessed and their places taken by Cromwellians.

Since that time the history of Kells has been uneventful, and though the town never regained its former importance, it slowly recuperated and is now one of the most prosperous towns of central Ireland.

CHAPTER II.

THE GEOGRAPHY OF THE TOWN OF KELLS.

If we take our stand at the open place in the centre of the town we find much of its history enshrined in the names of the streets which radiate from that point. We are actually in Castle Street and stand on the site of the Anglo Norman Castle erected by the De Lacys shortly after the Norman invasion of Ireland. Looking down the hill we have John Street, at the foot of which stood the Priory of St. John the Baptist, of which the burial ground is still in use. On the right hand is Cross Street which takes its name from the cross before our eyes. On the left—a continuation is Maudlin Street, leading to Maudlin Bridge beside which stood the Chapel of Saint Mary Magdalene, no remains of which survive. Branching off this thoroughfare is Carrick Street leading to the Carrick or Rock which is the highest point of the hill on which the town is built. Then, behind us is Market Street leading to Church Street—a name which needs no explanation. Other streets whose names are of historical interest are Canon Street where the Canons of the Abbey of Saint Mary the Virgin used to walk, and Suffolk Street, the name of which is probably a corruption of Siofic, which is mentioned in the Annals of the Four Masters and in the Book of Kells as a place in or near the town.

The visitor may now examine the Cross which stands before him,* thence proceed up Market Street and its continuation Church Lane to visit Saint Columkill's House and from thence go to the Churchyard for the other crosses, the Round Tower and some minor antiquities. We shall however describe them in their approximate chronological order.

*For a description of this Cross see p. 17.

[*Photo by Miss J. R. Beere.*

S. COLUMKILL'S HOUSE, KELLS.

CHAPTER III.

S. COLUMKILL'S HOUSE.

The visitor will probably be told that Saint Columkill's House was built by the Saint himself. This however is not the case. In the time of Saint Columba houses and even the ecclesiastical buildings were constructed of wattles and clay, and naturally not a vestige remains. The probability is that the building was erected by Cellach the Abbot of Iona, as recorded in the Annals of Clonmacnoise under the year 804. Somewhere about this time the Norsemen attacked Iona and the brethren there fled for their lives, bearing with them the bones of Saint Columba and whatever relics and valuables they could gather together. They came to Kells and found there brethren following the same rule as themselves; a hearty welcome was accorded them and they set about building what they called a "New City of Hy Columcille," that is to say a new Iona.

Saint Columkill's House is situated on almost the highest point of the hill upon which Kells is built, and when seen from a distance it may be noticed that it overtops all the surrounding houses. It has always been regarded as an honour due to the Saint that no house should be built so as to overlook the "Teach Columcille." From the north west corner a remarkable view of the country is obtained, and the panorama presented is one unrivalled in the County Meath. It is substantially built and is evidently the work of men who were no mere prentice hands. It has stood now for eleven centuries, and there seems to be no reason why, with proper care, it should not stand for eleven centuries yet to come. It is now preserved as a National Monument.

As to the features of the building, we have first of all to note that it has been much altered and patched, so

BERKELEY BAPTIST DIVINITY
SANDFORD FLEMING LIBRARY

that we must carefully distinguish between comparatively new work and that which was originally found in it. The present entrance is modern. At some former time there seems to have been a door at the east end, which is now built up. That also is modern. The original entrance was at the west end and was a very small aperture, raised somewhat above the level of the ground on the outside, and considerably above the level of the floor inside.

It has in the interior a "barrel roof" which exhibits in an interesting way the transition from the primitive arch formed by overlapping stone, to the true arch built with a keystone. For half the way up it is constructed in the primitive manner and then it is finished by stones built on the radiating principle. The outer roof is formed simply by overlapping stones. The visitor who ascends the ladder will see this method of construction very plainly. Between the outer and the inner roof is a croft divided by partition walls into three chambers, which may have been used as dormitories—but this is very doubtful.

In the west wall, underneath the doorway, are two recesses with seats. When we consider the position of the door and all the other features of the building we are forced to the conclusion that it was not a church in the ordinary acceptation of the term. Perhaps the most probable explanation is that suggested by the late Mr. Goddard H. Orpen, that the House was erected as a receptacle for the bones of Saint Columkill when his relics were carried over from Iona. Probably too, an "Enclosed Anchorite" kept vigil over the sacred treasure.

THE ROUND TOWER, KELLS.

CHAPTER IV.
THE ROUND TOWER.

The Round Tower of Kells is a very excellent specimen of its class. It is about 90 feet high and is quite perfect, except that the conical roof is missing. The points to be noticed are first the doorway which is small, admitting the entrance of only one person at a time, and raised a considerable distance from the ground—much higher than it appears, for the ground has been raised by successive interments. It will also be noticed that the present doorway is of a different style of building from the rest of the tower and obviously more modern. Then in the inside may be seen the stone ledges on which the floors of the different storeys rested. At the top there are five windows—thus departing from the normal type which has four openings facing the four cardinal points. The reason for the five openings is probably to be found in the fact that the town was formerly approached by five roads for which five gates were made in Anglo Norman times.

Much has been written on the date of the round towers of Ireland, and it was a favourite theory some time ago that they belonged to the old fire worshippers and were of an antiquity dating from long before the Christian era. Modern antiquaries have nearly all come to the conclusion that they are of Christian origin, that they were used for belfries and were also erected for purposes of security and defence, and that they date from the period of the Danish invasions. The tower of Kells may help us to form an opinion on this matter.

At first sight it would seem that such a building would be of little use for refuge or defence; but when we examine it more carefully, and remember the conditions of warfare that then existed, we are led to conclude that the contrivance was at once ingenious and effective. To begin with, the building was of such a substantial kind that it could not easily be injured, and the round shape

presented no corner from which a stone could be dislodged. Then, if an entrance was to be effected the door must be reached, and this was about 10 feet from the ground and so small that only one man could enter at a time. Exactly over the door, but at a sufficient height to be a difficult mark for an archer is a window from which missiles could be hurled at the assailants who could only come in single file. Probably the entrance itself was closed by a strong door which had to be broken down under these disadvantageous circumstances. Supposing all these difficulties to be overcome and an entrance effected the intruder did not find himself to be much advanced, for the floor was on the level of the ground outside and he therefore had to descend into a kind of well, with his enemies far above, and hurling at him stones from which he could not possibly escape. To reach the enemy he must use a ladder, but no ladder of the requisite length could be introduced through the door; the only possible way therefore would be to join two smaller ladders together and to effect the joining under the murderous fire from overhead. And even if he accomplished this, he had to make his way in the end through a small trap door with the certainty that his head would be cudgelled as soon as he had come within reach. The windows at the top also served their purpose, for the watchman would have discerned the foe long before he had come near, and it was therefore impossible to make a surprise attack, and from the same windows signals could be made to friendly neighbours to come with assistance. In the absence of fire arms and battering rams, a better defence could scarcely have been devised.

That this defence was not always effectual is shown by the evidence that the building exhibits of damage done to the part of the tower round about the entrance, which was afterwards repaired in a different style of building; and also by the record in the Annals of the Four Masters that in the year 1076 Murchad was slain in this Round Tower.

CHAPTER V.

THE STONE CROSSES.

We now turn to the Stone Crosses, and for the student of these interesting memorials of the past there is no locality in Ireland where he can study them with so much advantage. Antiquaries are disposed to place the execution and erection of these crosses at dates from the 9th to the 12th century. But there are certain features which would seem to point to an earlier date. First of all we notice that none of the Figures is nimbed. Now, "the transition from the complete absence to the constant presence of the Nimbus was effected during the seventh, eighth, and ninth centuries." It would seem therefore that the age of the crosses should be placed within these limits. Then there is the treatment of Our Lord's Crucifixion. The present conventional method has come down from very early mediaeval times, and anything not conforming to that convention must be of great age. Before looking at the Crosses it would therefore be well for the visitor to notice the old Anglo-Norman tombstone which is fastened to the Church belfry.* It may date from the 13th century, but it represents a convention established long before. Note that the Saviour's Head is bent and is surrounded with a cruciform Nimbus—that the Figure is unclothed save for a loin cloth—that the signs of emaciation are strongly marked, that the feet are crossed, and that the Blessed Virgin and Saint John are one on each side.

Anglo-Norman Tombstone fastened to Church Belfry

*See page 22.

Now let us go to visit the Cross beside the Round Tower. On the West side we find the Crucifixion, not at the intersection of the arms of the Cross as we would have expected, but on the shaft. And we find that the Head is erect, there is no Nimbus, the Figure is clothed, the Arms extended from the Elbow in the attitude of prayer, the feet separate, and (a peculiarity only found in Ireland) bound with a rope. Instead of the Blessed Virgin and Saint John we have the two soldiers, one with the sponge and the other with the spear. All these are marks of great antiquity. Above this we have "The Lord in Glory" having in one hand a Sceptre and in the other the Resurrection Cross. Around Him are the Emblems of the Four Evangelists. On the other side we have Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel;* above that the Hebrew Children in the Furnace. The Son of Man covers them with His cloak outside of which the flames are raging, and two figures are adding fuel to the fire. This is a most interesting panel, as it points to Byzantine influence, the subject being treated in a similar way on many of the Byzantine Ivories. Above that is Daniel and the Lions, then two fishes crossed, part of the conventional design for the Miracle of the Loaves and Fishes which is to be seen complete on the Town Cross. Then on the top panel we have David playing before Saul with a small Irish harp which rests on his knees. On the left arm The Sacrifice of Isaac.

This Cross is remarkable for the wealth and variety of Celtic ornamentation which it displays. We have at least six different styles of ornament: (1) simple interlacement; (2) interlacement of distorted human forms; (3) Birds with interlaced limbs; (4) Scrolls with animal forms introduced; (5) interlaced serpents or "beasties"; (6) Spirals and bosses.

---

*By some thought to be the expulsion of Adam from the garden. —F. J. A. B.

CROSS BESIDE ROUND TOWER
(Front).

CROSS BESIDE ROUND TOWER
(Back).

STREET CROSS or MARKET CROSS
(Front).

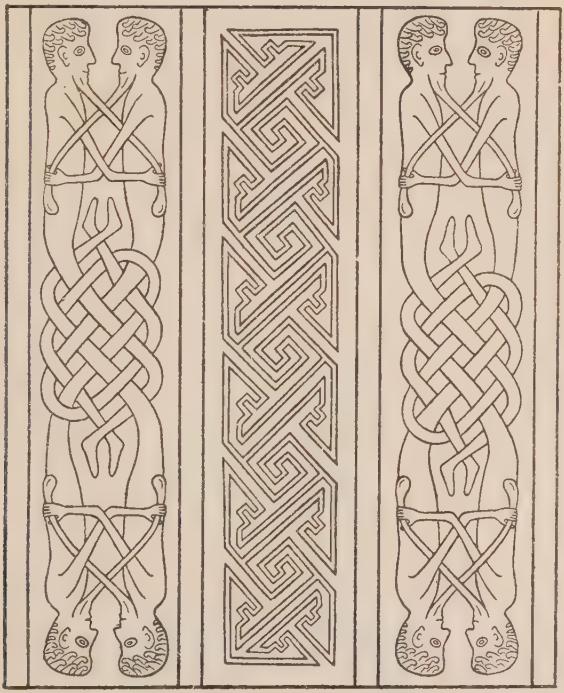
STREET CROSS or MARKET CROSS
(Back).

CARVINGS ON BASE OF MARKET CROSS.

There is also an inscription on the base which may be read "Patricii and Colum. . .," that is to say, "(The Cross) of Patrick and Colum(cille)." This, though manifestly ancient, may be of later date than the carvings.

It is worthy of note that the bases of the older Crosses seldom have sacred subjects. Here we have on one side warriors with horses and chariots, and on the other side a variety of animals, with possibly a hunter engaged in their pursuit.

The Street Cross or Market Cross seems to come next in the order of age.



DESIGN ON STREET OR MARKET CROSS.

There is reason to think that this Cross marked the ancient boundary of the city and was therefore a "Termon Cross." The Four Masters refer to it telling us that in 1156 the town was burned from the Cross to the Siofic.

It has had its vicissitudes. In the 17th century it had fallen, and in the year 1688, when there was so much of dissension and civil war in the country, a citizen of Kells, Robert Balfe, was engaged in the peaceful task of re-erecting this ancient symbol of the faith. He hacked away some of the sculpture on the shaft and placed there instead the following inscription:

> This Cross was erected (a)t the charge of Robert (Ba)lfe of Gall . . irstowne Es(q) (be)ing Soveraigne of the Corporation of Kells Anno Domi 1688.

(A tombstone to the last of the Balfe family is to be seen in the churchyard.)

In our own day a cut stone base has been placed beneath it at the sole expense of a respected citizen of Kells, the late Mr. John O'Ferrall.

Looking at the Figure of Our Saviour we find the Head erect, the Figure clothed, and the Feet bound, but the Figure is now placed at the intersection of the arms of the Cross and the Arms, though not in the attitude of Prayer are not in the attitude of Crucifixion. We have therefore still many tokens of antiquity, but not so many as are found on the Cross in the Churchyard.

Beneath the Crucifixion is the Miracle of the Loaves and Fishes, and underneath that what may possibly be "Pilate washing his hands." The other designs on this side have not been explained. It may be

SHAFT OF CROSS AT CHURCH DOOR
(Front).

SHAFT OF CROSS AT CHURCH DOOR
(Back)

well to notice however the group of Ecclesiastics on one of the arms, one of whom has an Irish brooch fastening his cope. On the opposite face we have Daniel and the Lions, Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, the Sacrifice of Isaac, the Holy Sepulchre with Soldiers guarding, and some others which have not been identified. On the sides we have David delivering the Sheep out of the mouth of the Lion, the Hand of Blessing in the western form of benediction, Jacob and the Angel, and other subjects not explained. On the base, on two sides we have beasts of various kinds, with two centaurs, one armed with bow and arrow, and the other with a trident. On the other two sides we have soldiers, both cavalry and infantry, armed with swords, spears and shields. In the "Song of Dermot and the Earl," written about the time of the Anglo Norman invasion, we are told that "the traitors"—the writer was an Irishman though he thus describes his countrymen—"on their knees awaited the barons." They were not suppliants, but fighting men, and their method of warfare is illustrated here, where the spearmen are all represented as resting on one knee.

The **shaft of a cross** stands in front of the Church door. It is more highly finished than the two just described, each picture is enclosed in a kind of frame, and the subjects represented require a certain amount of grouping and artistic treatment. They also imply a knowledge of traditions which were followed by artists in other countries, and the ornament is not so characteristically Celtic. We cannot therefore be far wrong in concluding that it is of later date than the other two. There is a cross at Monasterboice which looks like the workmanship of the same artist, and which is said to have been erected by Muireadach the abbot, who died in 924. This helps us to fix the date, and by inference the date of the other two, which are much older.

It is to be regretted that the arms and upper portion of this cross are missing, as, if complete, it would be one of the finest in Ireland. It seems to have been complete in the time of Cromwell, and that it was maliciously thrown down and broken may easily be seen. The base still bears the mark of the crowbar which was used to force the shaft from its socket, and the shaft itself has at this point a large portion broken away from the edge, evidently due to the action of the same destructive instrument. Being thus prized up from one corner it must have fallen diagonally, and by the crushing power of its great weight another large fragment was broken off from the opposite corner. The shaft was restored to its base by the late Archdeacon Stopford. Search has been made for the missing portion, but so far without result.

On the side facing the church we have the Baptism of Christ in the river Jordan. It is to be noted that the Baptism is by aspersion—not by immersion. The two sources of the river are shown according to tradition—one being the "Jor" and the other the "Dan," forming together the Jordan. This tradition dates back to before the time of Saint Jerome. The two disciples on the shore display for us the Ecclesiastical costume of the time. There is a long garment or cassock, over this a shorter garment, and over it again a cope. The Irish brooch fastening the cope can be easily recognized. Above this we have the Visit of the Shepherds and still higher up the Descent into Egypt. On the other side, Adam and Eve (note the serpent twining round the roots of the tree) and Noah coming out of the Ark. The other sculptures are too much worn to be easily recognized. The sides are covered with ornamental designs, in good preservation but calling for no particular comment.

THE UNFINISHED CROSS
(Front).

THE UNFINISHED CROSS
(Back).

THE UNFINISHED CROSS.

On the South side of the Church there is another cross which, though latest in date, has an interest of its own, for it was never finished, and therefore shows a cross in process of making. The panels are prepared for carving and some of the carving has been begun, but it was never completed. The Crucifixion is here represented, and some of the old Celtic traditions are followed. The Head is Erect, the Figure is Clothed and the Feet are separate—but there is possibly a nimbus, and the arms are extended in the attitude of suffering. These peculiarities point to a later date, and we may perhaps look on this unfinished cross as a pathetic relic of the year 1173 when Hugh de Lacy dispersed the Irish community and brought in English monks to take their place.

There still remains the round base of a cross, which stands near the belfry. It probably ranks in age with the older crosses, but is much weatherworn, and the interlaced patterns with which it was formerly decorated are almost obliterated.

CHAPTER VI.

SEPULCHRAL SLABS.

Besides these High Crosses there are two sepulchral slabs now fastened to the Church tower which belong to the pre-Norman Era. One is sculptured with a small incised Cross surrounded by a circle and is without inscription of any kind. The other is much larger and has an ornamented cross in relief worked upon it. It is of comparatively late date—possibly the middle of the 12th century. It bears an inscription which is so much obliterated that it cannot now be read. It has also the three sacred monograms, "A" "Ω," I.H.S. and "XP."

CHAPTER VII.

THE CHURCH TOWER.

The other monuments fastened to the belfry are of much later date. The oldest is the sculptured tombstone already mentioned.*

The Church tower itself is the only remaining part of the pre-Reformation Church, which was a cruciform structure with a large chancel. The spire is modern. Above the door is a black letter inscription, the deciphering of which will afford the visitor an opportunity of exercising his ingenuity. It reads as follows:

The bodie of this churche being i utter ruyn and decaie was reedi
fied i ano dni 1578 et in ano xx Elizabeth xx throghe the dilig
ce and care of the reverede father i god hughe brady byshop of Mea
he and sir ihos Garvie archedieaco of the same and deane of christ churc
i dublin bothe of here maiestie is prive consaile Sr Herie Sidne Knight of the nobil ordire being thene Lord deputie etc. The said
reedifying was beguine and seatt forward be the advyse and dal carfull travael of the auncient burgis Nicholas D
then being suffraine of Kenllis 2 of Julii ao prdicto
with other daly furtherens boght the rowff of this
C uppo his owin prpir chargis God is not unright
at he shude forget the worke and labour that precdet
which love is showed for his nam is sake.

It will be noticed that the name of the Sovereign of Kells who helped so much in the re-edifying is not given —only "Nicholas D". Most probably his name was Daly, for twice in the inscription this word is unnecessarily brought in, with the intention of punning on the name. A mural tablet on the jamb of the door, with crest, coat of arms, and the initials N D probably belong to the same man.

* See page 15.

Another inscription of the same date will be found on the West side of the tower. It tells its own tale and is as follows:

THIS . WINDOWE
WAS . BUILDED . BI . RI
CHARD . FLOUDI . OF
KENLIS . MERCHEAU
NT . THE . 12 . OF . JULI
1578 . WHOSE . SOULE
GOD . TAKE . TO . HIS
MERCI

Beside this is an old sun dial which calls for no comment.

The Church itself is a plain structure and was erected in the closing years of the 18th century.

⊙ ⊙ ⊙ ⊙ ⊙ ⊙

CHAPTER VIII.

THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH.

The Roman Catholic Church was built at the beginning of the 19th century. A tablet to the memory of the Rev. Peter O'Reilly, who was then parish priest, records that "animated by his zeal (and aided by the munificence of the Most Noble the Marquis of Headfort who granted this beautiful site and the ground annexed to it with a princely donation) the parishioners raised in times of public distress and calamity this temple for the Worship of the living God." Another tablet to Father O'Reilly's successor the Very Rev. Michael Kearney tells us that "to testify their high sense of his worth and deep regret for his loss the Right Hon. the Earl of Bective and the Protestant Gentry of this neighbourhood have in unison with the Catholic parishioners munificently contributed to erect this handsome memento of their dear departed friend." These two tombstones are interesting memorials of the friendly feeling that existed between all classes at the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth century– a friendliness which happily continues to the present day.

CHAPTER IX.

WALLS.

As soon as the English took possession of Kells they fortified the place and built a wall around the town. A few vestiges of this remain, including one of the bastions, at the back of the houses in Cannon Street. It is not easily approached nor is it particularly interesting.

Outside this wall was built the Abbey of Saint Mary which was an important foundation in its day—but not a vestige of it now remains and the very site is forgotten. At the other side of the town, near the Court House, was the Priory of Saint John the Baptist, belonging to the Trinitarians or Red Friars. It too has disappeared. In the burial ground is a sculptured tombstone without inscription and of very poor workmanship. It is a remarkable fact that these stately structures, erected by the Normans, have completely passed away, while the Celtic remains which were there for centuries before the coming of the English are with us still.

CHAPTER X.

NEIGHBOURING ANTIQUITIES.

Besides these antiquities which are actually in Kells there are others within easy reach.

(A) Druidical Remains at Loughcrew.

Of ante-Christian remains the most important are the tumuli of Loughcrew. For those who take an interest in Druidical stone monuments there is no better field of study. They are so extensive that even a meagre description of them would exceed the space at our disposal.

(B) Ancient Palace of Teltown.

About 4 miles from Kells is the site of the ancient palace of Teltown. As at Tara, only earthworks are here to be seen, but they are most extensive. Teltown is connected with the history of Saint Patrick and Saint Columba. The Fair of Teltown was a great annual gathering in pre-Christian days. Besides the ordinary business, laws were often enacted at these meetings and in early Christian times, some synods were held.

(C) Church of Dulane.

The ruined church of Dulane, about 2 miles from Kells, is preserved as a National Monument and is one of the most ancient edifices to be found in Ireland. Notice should be taken of the immense size of the stones used in the building recalling the Cyclopian ruins found at Mycene. This is especially remarkable about the doorway in the west end, the lintel stone of which must be several tons in weight. (The doorway on the South side is com-

paratively modern.) It should be noted also that the jambs of the door are inclined, so that the opening is wider at the bottom than at the top, a peculiarity that is also found in the doorways of Cyclopian work in Greece and Italy. It will be seen also that the North and South walls project a little at East and West, forming what are often incorrectly called pilasters. There is nothing to strike the imagination in this small building, but for the student of Early Architecture it is most interesting.

(D) Church of S. Keiran the Pious.

The ruined Church of Saint Keiran the Pious is a little more than three miles away. The ruin itself is not interesting, but there are three fine high crosses marking the boundary of the Church Yard on three sides. The crosses are of large size and perfectly plain. Their interest lies in the fact that they mark the boundaries of the sanctuary within which the fugitives from vengeance would be safe. The river Blackwater flows past this site, and the base of a fourth cross may be seen in the river. This also marks the sanctuary, and it will be noticed that it is placed quite close to the farther bank—so that the fugitive had only to plunge into the river and he was at once, as the ancients would have expressed it, "under the protection of God and Saint Keiran." An old Church Canon enacted "Let the terminus of a holy place have marks about it. Wherever you find the sign of the Cross of Christ, do not do any injury. Three persons consecrate a terminus of a holy place—a King, a bishop and the people."

(E) Ogham Stone.

There is in this Churchyard a small ogham stone. It is inconspicuous, but will be found near the West wall of

the Church. The inscription has been deciphered by Professor Rhys of Oxford, and reads *Covagni maqui Mucoi Lugini*: "the Stone of Cuan son of the Kni of Luigni." The Luigni have left their name to the Barony of Lune in the Co. Meath.

(F) Holy Well of S. Keiran.

The Holy Well of St. Keiran is close by. . . Sir William Wilde described it as "One of the most beautiful holy wells in Ireland." Here a "pattern" is held on the first Sunday in August and is very largely attended. Saint Keiran died on the 14th June in the year 770. He is of course to be distinguished from the better known Saint Keiran of Clonmacnoise.

⊙ ⊙ ⊙ ⊙ ⊙ ⊙

CHAPTER XI.

ANTIQUITIES OF KELLS ELSEWHERE.

(1) The Book of Kells.

A few words may be added as to some remains connected with Kells which are now deposited in other places. The most important of these is the Book of Kells now in the Library of Trinity College, Dublin, and is the most beautiful and most valuable manuscript in Ireland. It is a copy of the Gospels in Latin, and was doubtless one of the Service books used in the Church. It follows the Vulgate of Saint Jerome, but with some peculiar readings. The legend is that the elaborate designs in this book were shown to the scribe by an angel, who each night instructed him as to what he was to do on the morrow—so "in this manner the book was composed, an angel furnishing the design, Saint Brigid praying and the Scribe copying." The date of the book must be somewhere in the 7th century.

Besides the beautiful illuminations, the Book has another interest, arising from the fact that copies of documents were made on the blank spaces which were left here and there in the book. These were written centuries after the book came from the hands of the scribe, and refer mostly to the transfer of landed property. They are, as Dr. O'Donovan says, "extremely interesting to the historian as proving that the ancient Irish had committed their covenants to writing in their own language long before the Anglo Norman invasion."

(2) The Crozier of Kells.

The Crozier of Kells is now in the British Museum and was made in Kells sometime between 950 and 1050. It has an inscription which may be translated "Pray for Cuduldig and for Melfinnen." This Melfinnen was Abbot of Kells in 967. This crozier was found at the back of a

cupboard which was built into the wall of an old house in London. How it came there no one knows. It came into the possesion of the late Cardinal Wiseman, and at his death was sold to the British Museum.

(4) The Cathac. The Bell of S. Patrick. The Miosach.

The Yellow Book of Lecain records that Saint Cairnech of Dulane (who was contemporary with Saint Patrick) gave to the Clan O'Neill three standards—that is to say three sacred objects, which were to be brought into the battle field in order to secure victory. These were the Cathac, the Bell of Saint Patrick and the Miosach of Cairnech.

The Cathac was a copy of the ~~New Testament~~ Psalms which Saint Columba made, but which was claimed by Saint Finen of Ulster, the owner of the original. A lawsuit followed which was tried at Teltown, and the King gave his judgment that as every cow owns its own calf, every book owns its own copy. Saint Columba was not satisfied with this decision and the O'Donnells of Donegal taking up his cause, a battle ensued from whence the name Cathac, meaning Battle. In the 11th century the Book was enclosed in a metal cumdach or casket, which was made in Kells, and is one of the most beautiful examples of Irish metal work still existing. It bears the inscription "Pray for Cathbarr O'Donnell for whom this cumdach was made, and for Sitric Son of Mac Aedha who made it, and for Donall Mac Robartaigh Coarb of Kells at whose house it was made." This casket is now exhibited in the Museum in Dublin.

The Bell of Saint Patrick is also to be seen in the Dublin Museum. The third "Standard," the Miosach of Saint Cairnech is lost and no one knows exactly what it was. But the casket in which it was enshrined still exists and is kept at Saint Columba's College at Whitechurch near Dublin.

CHAPTER XII.

KELLS OF TO-DAY.

General Information.

The Urban District of Kells has an area of 266 acres, containing a Population of 2,196 (Census 1926), of which 1,687 were born in the County Meath.

How to get to Kells.

There is an excellent Bus Service from Aston's Quay, Dublin, which affords ample time for a morning or afternoon visit to the Antiquities. Information as to the time-table of this Service can be obtained at the Bus Office, Aston's Quay.

The Great Northern Railway Service is also available. Train times can be found in any Railway Guide.

The Road from Dublin to Kells is one of the best in the Free State for Motorists.

Hospitality.

Visitors will find the Headfort Arms Hotel most comfortable for Luncheons and Teas.

Note.—Wednesday is early closing day in Kells. Business houses shut at 1 p.m.

The Main Gate of S. Columba's Parish Churchyard is open daily from 9 a.m. to Sunset.

During these hours the Crosses, Ancient Tower Round Tower and Monumental Slabs, etc., can be visited.

S. Columkill's House.

The Key can be obtained from
Mr. WILLIAM BELL, Church Lane.

WARNING.

Visitors are respectfully requested not to chip or mar the Antiquities.

F. J. A. B.

The Map of Kells at back of Historic
kind permission for doing so having been

Guide has been based on the Ordnance Survey Map,
ranted by the Minister for Finance of Saorstat Eireann.

Date Due

MAR 1 '60			
	PRINTED	IN U. S. A.	

GTU Library
2400 Ridge Road
Berkeley, CA 94709
(510) 649-2500

LIBRARY RULES

1. **No book may be taken from the library without being charged** to the [illegible]. Borrowers are responsible for [illegible] done to the volumes while in their possession and are expected to make good losses.
2. (a) **Reserve Books** may be drawn for a period of two hours. In case no call has been made in the interval, books may be renewed for a second two hours. (Where there is only one copy, book must be used in the library.)
   (b) Reserve books taken at 10 p.m. Mondays to Fridays are due at 9 a.m. the next morning. A reserve book taken from the library at 12 m. Saturday is due at 9 a.m. the following Monday.
3. Books not on reserve may be drawn from the library for two weeks and may be renewed once for the same period, except one-day books.
4. A fine of five cents a day will be charged on each book which is not returned according to the above rule.
5. **MAGAZINES ARE NOT** to be taken from the library.
6. Infringement of these rules may lead to withdrawal of library privileges.

GTU LIBRARY
3 2400 00570 7074

YF24
H34